

# **U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

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**STATEMENT**

**OF**

**DAVID HARPER  
SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE  
NEW ORLEANS FIELD DIVISION**

**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**CONCERNING**

**"THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN NEW ORLEANS  
FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA"  
PRESENTED ON  
APRIL 10, 2007**

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**“The Criminal Justice System in New Orleans  
Following Hurricane Katrina”  
April 10, 2007**

Chairman Bobby Scott, Congressman Forbes, Congressman Golmert and members of the House Subcommittee, my name is David Harper, Special Agent in Charge for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, New Orleans Field Division. I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the significant contributions of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) relating to the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the criminal justice system in New Orleans.

Violent crime in New Orleans was an increasing concern even before Hurricane Katrina. Just months before the storm, the Department of Justice and ATF established a Violent Crime Impact Team or VCIT in New Orleans. Since August of 2006, the Department of Justice has funded the detail assignments of four (4) to six (6) additional special agents to New Orleans.

We believe that ATF's contribution to a long term solution must necessarily include focusing our resources on that relatively small group of violent recidivists that commit a disproportionate amount of the violent crime. We have begun targeting that group using a four point approach.

**First:** Establishing an ATF/NOPD team to identify and target the most violent repeat offenders who have most benefited from a disrupted local criminal justice system. To date, 71 individuals have been identified and investigations are underway.

**Second:** Preventing the diversion of firearms from legitimate retail commerce into the crime gun market through aggressive investigation of thefts from Federal firearms licensees and illegal firearms trafficking.

**Third:** Re-establishing the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) System at the new NOPD Crime Lab and dedicating four (4) special agents to investigate cold case serial homicides and assaults linked through that technology.

**Fourth:** Actively adopting firearms cases from Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies for Federal prosecution whenever appropriate.

Since the ATF VCIT was augmented by the Justice Department in August 2006, cases against 108 defendants have been forwarded to Mr. Letten's office for Federal prosecution.

Gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and share with you our progress in making our Nation's communities safer, but we know there is much more to do. We are determined to succeed in our mission of reducing violent crime, preventing terrorism, and protecting the public. In closing, I would like to specifically acknowledge the good work being done by the Chief Riley and the men and women of the New Orleans Police Department despite the enormous challenges we face. I look forward to responding to any questions you may have.